

Message Text

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DRAFTED BY S/S-O:PJOHNSON

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USDEL SECRETARY PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 127408 TOSEC 020189

LIMDIS

FOLLOWING REPEAT VIENTIANE 3897 ACTION SECSTATE INFO
BANGKOK KUALA LUMPUR MAY 31.

QUOTE: C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 3897

LIMDIS

BANGKOK AND KUALA LUMPUR FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY HABIB
DEPARTMENT PASS SECRETARY'S PARTY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: AEMR, APER, LA

SUBJ: U.S. PRESENCE IN LAOS

REF: STATE 127086

1. WE HAVE NOT PREVIOUSLY SAT DOWN TO APPEAL THE
INSTRUCTION TO REDUCE STAFF TO "UNDER 50" BY JUNE 5
BECAUSE WE FRANKLY THOUGHT THAT WASHINGTON HAD A
CLEARER UNDERSTANDING OF OUR SITUATION AT THE MOMENT
THAN REFTEL INDICATES. WE HAVE NEVER SAID THAT WE
FELT ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH SUCH A REDUCTION WITHIN THE
TIME-FRAME INDICATED AND ON THE CONTRARY HAVE STRESSED
IN SEVERAL TELECONS WITH DEPTOFFS THAT THERE WERE CON-
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SIDERATIONS WHICH -- FOR US WHO ARE HAVING TO DO THE
ACTUAL WORK OF PHASE-DOWN -- ARE FAR MORE IMPORTANT THAN
ANY SPECIFIC NUMBER. (THIS PRESUMES, OF COURSE, THAT
WASHINGTON DOES NOT HAVE IN MIND SOME DRAMATIC UNILATERAL

ACTION, SUCH AS SUSPENSION OF RELATIONS OR PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF FIRM ADMINISTRATION DECISION TO SEEK NO RPT NO ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE FOR LAOS IN FY 76. THIS HAS NOT BEEN THE SENSE OF THE CABLE TRAFFIC AND IF ANY SUCH THING IS IN THE WIND, WE SHOULD CERTAINLY BE ADVISED OF IT SOONER RATHER THAN LATER.)

2. AT THE MOMENT WE NEED EVERY OFFICER AMONG THE 150 OR SO WE NOW HAVE (A REDUCTION OF MORE THAN HALF IN LESS THAN TWO WEEKS). AS A MATTER OF FACT, WE HAVE HAD TO BRING IN TDY PERSONNEL TO COVER C&R, SECRETARIAL AND OTHER VACANCIES BROUGHT ABOUT IN PART BY THE DRASTIC REDUCTION ALREADY MADE. USAID LEGAL OFFICER ARRIVED FROM BANGKOK MORNING MAY 31 PRECISELY TO HELP US RESOLVE QUESTIONS WE ARE BEING ASKED DAILY IN AIDAC MESSAGES; USAID COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER IS BEING BROUGHT BACK FROM BANGKOK, AND RCO IS ALREADY HERE FROM MANILA, TO FIGURE OUT WHAT WE ARE GOING TO BE ABLE TO ESTABLISH IN WAY OF INTERNAL TELEPHONE COMMUNICATIONS, AND LINKS BETWEEN CHANCERY AND RESIDENCE, WHEN WE HAVE TO GIVE UP SWITCHBOARD IN USAID COMPOUND.

3. INDEED, USAID AS A WHOLE IS CLEAREST AND MOST ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE OF OUR PRESENT SITUATION. THE 30-ODD REMAINING USAID EMPLOYEES ARE RIGHT NOW WORKING 90-HOUR WEEKS, IF NOT MORE. EVERY LAO LANGUAGE OFFICER IS ENGAGED IN LIAISON WORK WITH LPF AND DEMONSTRATORS TO ASSURE CONTINUED ACCESS TO COMPOUND IN FACE OF RULES THAT CHANGE WITH EACH SHIFT OF GUARDS, TO GET HOUSEHOLD GOODS SHIPMENTS MOVING, AND SO FORTH. EVERY MODEST SUCCESS IN THIS REGARD IS OBTAINED ONLY AT COST OF MANY MAN-HOURS. OTHER USAID OFFICERS ARE PREPARING SEVERANCE PAY FOR LOCALS WHO ARE TO BE DROPPED, LINING UP EQUIPMENT FOR TURNOVER, ETC. ONLY THIS MORNING, MAY 31, AFTER PRESSING FOR DAYS, DID WE RECEIVE FONOFF NOTE LISTING 21 MEMBERS OF PGNU COMMITTEE DESIGNATED TO RECEIVE EQUIPMENT, ETC., THAT USAID IS TO TURN OVER. (CHAIRMAN IS CHEF DE CABINET OF MINISTRY OF ECONOMY AND PLAN.) NOTE PROPOSED INITIAL MEETING AT 0900
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HOURS MONDAY JUNE 2.

4. ALL OTHER ELEMENTS ARE SIMILARLY STRETCHED THIN. AS ONE EXAMPLE, SPECIAL ASSISTANT FOR MISSING-IN-ACTION MATTERS, WHOSE OWN FRONT IS RELATIVELY QUIET AT MOMENT, HAS PITCHED IN AT GSO TO HELP GET OUTBOUND SHIPMENTS MOVING. IN SHORT, THERE ARE NO IDLE HANDS.

5. IF USAID PHASE-OUT IS TO BE CONDUCTED IN AN ORDERLY AND LEGAL MANNER, IF WE ARE NOT TO COMPLICATE OUR PROBLEMS BY DESERTING NA HAI DIAO COMPOUND BEFORE WE HAVE MADE ADEQUATE DISPOSITION OF LARGE AMOUNTS OF NON-USAID GOVERNMENT PROPERTY THEREIN, AND IF WE ARE TO COPE WITH MYRIAD OTHER

DAILY PROBLEMS, WE CANNOT RPT CANNOT MEET JUNE 5 TARGET DATE. TO DO SO WOULD BE AN INVITATION TO CHAOS AND WOULD COMPROMISE THE CHANCES THAT NOW EXIST OF RESIDUAL MISSION'S BEING ABLE TO FUNCTION.

6. WE CANNOT AT THIS DATE OFFER A PRECISE TIMETABLE FOR REACHING LIMITED RESIDUAL STRENGTH FIGURE (WHICH ITSELF WILL BE SUBJECT OF FURTHER SEPTTEL) BUT WE ARE RELEASING PERSONNEL ON CASE-BY-CASE BASIS THE MINUTE THEIR WORK HERE IS FINISHED. WE CAN IN ALL PROBABILITY GET ALL USAID EMPLOYEES OUT WELL BEFORE JUNE 30, BUT OUR ABILITY TO DO SO HINGES ON DISCRETIONARY AUTHORITY TO KEEP THEM FOR NOW.

7. WE REPEAT: THE ALTERNATIVE IS TO ABANDON ALL USAID INSTALLATIONS AND EQUIPMENT ON A CRASH BASIS, WITHOUTT BEING ABLE TO TURN THEM OVER AS PROVIDED FOR IN THE "TREATY OF NA HAI DIAO," AND HAVE PERSONNEL SCRAMBLE AWAY LIKE REFUGEES FROM WAR, LEAVING PERSONAL EFFECTS BEHIND. IT WOULD BE UNSEEMLY AND WOULD SURELY NOT HELP PRESERVE WHATEVER CHANCE THERE IS OF CONTINUING RELATIONS WITH THIS COUNTRY. WE SHALL DISCUSS THIS WHOLE SUBJECT WITH ASSISTANT SECRETARY HABIB ON MONDAY, JUNE 2.
CHAPMAN
UNQUOTE INGERSOLL

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